



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Folk stories

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There are many folktales regarding the origin of some names of Aruba's places, with a close relationship to oral tradition, and in this episode, Etnia Nativa shares about the old Savaneta's harbor known as "Comandeurs' Bay".

The story goes as follows: It all took place in the area where a cruel commander named "Jahrman" used to force Caquetians native to carry cactus braches as weapons on their bare shoulders. One day the natives thought it was enough so, they abducted this Jahrman tied him to a horse and made the horse galloped off in to the sea until Jahrman perished; However another story tells us that the natives put Jahrman under a spell which made him jump on his

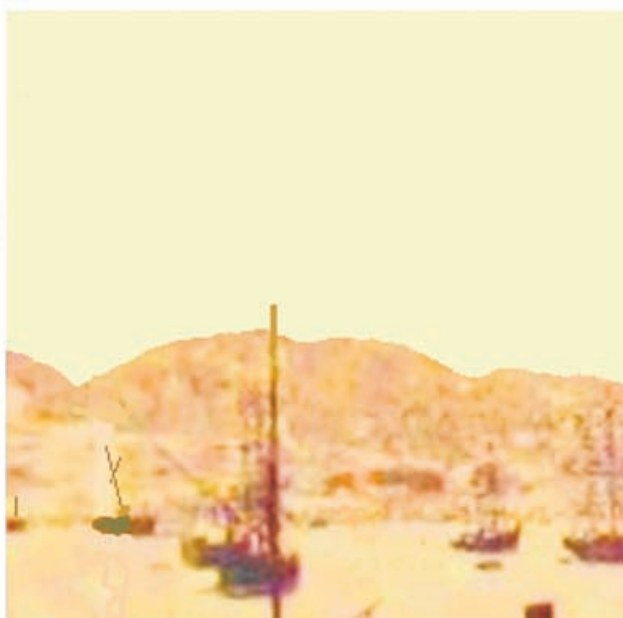
horse of his own free will spurred out to sea with the same dire consequences and the place has been called "Commanders' Bay", ever since. Is not surprised if the natives really got rid of the commander in that way! But the truth is, not because of this event that the bay received its name, but the fact that the Dutch commanders had their residence there closed to the sea and was the only stone house at that time. The fact is that the story coincides with the Papiamentu sentence: Comandeur, bai" which means: "Commander, go away."

Historical evidence of mistreatment or violent deaths of Aruba's governors is in suspense. While some historians deny that they know or ever heard of Commander Jahrman or the time in which he had settled in the Bay Area; in 1837 Commander Jacobus Jarman, without the "h", arrived at our island, at a time when the capital city Oranjes-

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tad already existed, so we conclude that this Commander Jarman has no connection with the one mentioned in the history of Commander's Bay. The truth is that the bay did not get its name because a commander has been chased into the sea there, but because the commanders used to live near the natives village.

The real historical fact is that Aruba natives lived-before the colonial era-on the southern coast. Commanders' Bay, consequently, became the neighborhood now called Savaneta, the first capital of Aruba. Official documents confirm; around 1825 that Reverend Bosch notes the following: --"Formerly the commander and his family lived at Commanders' Bay, which still bears this name. It is situated a few miles to the east. The only sign that I found that the main residence of the island had ever been on its shore were some Masonic graves, close together, which, from the names and dates inscribed on them, seemed to be centuries old." while in 1853 Father H.J. de Vries notes: --"At Commanders' Bay, situated three hours' drive east of Playa, which later became Oranjestad, there was only one stone house - that one of the Commander; in the desert are still found Masonic graves, in a state of decay, of the commander and his family." A document from the Public Record Office, Letters and Documents Relating to Curaçao—Protocols volume 1727, No. 112, removes the last vestige of doubt that the place close to the shore line was known as such. The name Savaneta originated during the latter part of the 19th century.



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